A2012-2-U

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

1988 ELECTED OFFICIALS SURVEY

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

January, 1989

Characterize the strength of the national economy for 1988 (this year) and 1989 (next year). Then characterize the strength of your city's economy for the same two time periods.

	Strong & Growing	Growing Not Strong	At a Stand-still	In Decline
National Economy in 1988	19	58	15	8
National Economy in 1989	13	54	21	12
My city economy in 1988	36	40	19	5
My city economy in 1989	36	45	15	4

Circle the response which best reflects the ability of your community to provide services in the next year <u>without increasing tax rates</u>.

It will be possible to maintain service levels without increasing tax rates.	56%
It will <u>not be possible to maintain</u> service levels without increasing tax rates.	28%
An <u>expansion</u> of service levels will be possible without increasing tax rates.	16%
	100%

How do you think your city/town will deal with the following areas in the next city budget?

	Will Raise	Will Hold Constant	Will Reduce	Don't Know
Taxes	27	67	3	3
Fees and Charges	61	37	0	2
Number of Municipal Employees	27	56	16	1
Budget Spending	43	42	13	2

Indicate how each of these conditions has changed in your community during the last year.

	Worsened	Improved	No Change	Not Sure
Drugs	67	7	24	2
Affordability of House Prices	51	16	31	2
Crime	45	16	38	1
Affordability of Rental Housing	45	16	35	4
Cost of Living	43	14	39	4
Homelessness	43	5	45	7
Availability of Low Income Housing	40	15	42	3
Cost of Energy	40	15	41	4
Solid Waste Disposal	39	20	39	2
Poverty	38	8	50	4
AIDS	36	3	35	26
Local Mortgage Conditions	35	18	41	6
Interest Rates on City Borrowing	32	23	37	8
City Fiscal Conditions	30	39	31	0
Streets, Roads and Sidewalks	30	46	24	0
Water & Sewer Treatment	24	39	35	2
Air Quality	24	15	57	4
Availability of Social Services	22	23	53	2
Health Care	21	25	50	4
Public Transportation	19	21	57	3
Overall Economic Conditions	17	55	27	1
Education	17	38	43	2
Unemployment	15	46	37	2
Supply of Energy	8	18	71	3

Which of the listed conditions is creating the most important problems in your community?

Drugs	39%
Solid Waste Disposal	28
Overall Economic Conditions	25
Crime	25
City Fiscal Conditions	23
Streets, Roads and Sidewalks	20
Unemployment	18
Water and Sewer Treatment	18
Availability of Low Income Housing	15
Affordability of House Prices	14
Education	12
Affordability of Rental Housing	11
Homelessness	7
Public Transportation	7
Cost of Living	7
Poverty	4
Interest Rates on City Borrowing	4
Air Quality	4
Cost of Energy	4
Local Mortgage Conditions	4
Health Care	3
AIDS	3
Availability of Social Services	3
Supply of Energy	2

NOTE: Each official was asked to select the top three, thus the total adds to 300%, three "votes" for each of the respondents.

Of the conditions listed which three have deteriorated the most in your community during the past five years?

Drugs	42%
Crime	24
Streets, Roads and Sidewalks	23
Solid Waste Disposal	21
Availability of Low Income Housing	20
Affordability of House Prices	18
Overall Economic Conditions	17
City Fiscal Conditions	16
Affordability of Rental Housing	13
Homelessness	12
Unemployment	12
Water and Sewer Treatment	11
Cost of Living	9
Education	9
Air Quality	8
Poverty	7
Cost of Energy	6
Local Mortgage Conditions	6
AIDS	6
Public Transportation	6
Health Care	6
Availability of Social Services	5
Interest Rates on City Borrowing	3
Supply of Energy	1

NOTE: Since the officials were asked to report the three most deteriorated conditions the percentages sum to 300%.

Of the listed conditions which three have improved the most, in your community during the past five years?

Overall Economic Conditions	40%
Streets, Roads and Sidewalks	29
Unemployment	29
City Fiscal Conditions	28
Water and Sewer Treatment	26
Education	22
Public Transportation	12
Crime	11
Availability of Social Services	10
Affordability of House Prices	10
Health Care	10
Availability of Low Income Housing	10
Supply of Energy	10
Interest Rates on City Borrowing	9
Solid Waste Disposal	8
Affordability of Rental Housing	7
Local Mortgage Conditions	7
Cost of Energy	6
Air Quality	5
Cost of Living	5
Homelessness	2
Drugs	2
Poverty	2
AIDS	1

NOTE: Each of the officials was asked for the three conditions improving the most, thus the percentages sum to 300%.

Of the listed conditions which three are going to be the most difficult to deal with during the next two years?

Drugs	42%
Solid Waste Disposal	34
City Fiscal Conditions	26
Crime	23
Overall Economic Conditions	20
Streets, Roads and Sidewalks	19
Water and Sewer Treatment	17
Availability of Low Income Housing	16
AIDS	10
Education	10
Unemployment	10
Affordability of House Prices	10
Affordability of Rental Housing	9
Homelessness	8
Poverty	7
Public Transportation	7
Air Quality	6
Availability of Social Services	5
Cost of Living	5
Health Care	5
Cost of Energy	4
Interest Rates on City Borrowing	3
Local Mortgage Conditions	2
Supply of Energy	1

NOTE: Since officials were asked for the three most difficult, the percentages above sum to 300%.

To what extent do you think the federal government will fulfill its responsibilities during the next two years on each of the following issues.

	Not at All	Less than Adequate	Adequate	More than Adequate	Exceptional
Solid Waste	18	65	16	1	0
Air Quality	12	61	25	2	0
Public Transportation	15	59	24	2	0
Homelessness	19	66	14	1	0
Housing	14	64	20	2	0
Streets, Roads & Sidewalks	17	59	22	2	0
Education	7	58	30	4	1
Poverty	18	65	16	1	0
Drugs	13	70	14	3	0
Water & Sewer Treatment	13	57	28	2	0
City Fiscal Conditions	28	55	16	1	0
Crime	13	63	22	2	0
Health Care	12	63	23	2	0
AIDS	11	60	22	7	0
Availability of Social Services	12	59	27	2	0

Mandates

Do you feel that requirements and mandates imposed by the federal government on your city have forced increased local taxes and/or fees?

Yes	84%
No	16%
	100%

What is the impact of federal requirements and mandates on your city budget in the following areas?

	Increased Costs	No Noticeable Impact	Decreased Costs
Solid Waste Disposal	79	21	0
Water & Sewer Treatment	78	22	0
Hazardous Materials	67	33	0
Municipal Borrowing	53	45	2
Municipal Personnel & Pay	51	48	1
Contracting Requirements	42	57	1

Over the past five years how has your city's relationship with the following institutions changed?

	WORSENED	IMPROVED	REMAINED CONSTANT
Federal Government	35	11	54
State Government	21	32	47
Media	19	31	50
City Residents	10	43	47
Business Community	7	57	36

How has your job as an elected city official changed on the following dimensions in the past five years?

	Increased	Unchanged	Decreased
Potential to solve problems	64	27	9
Time Demands	81	17	2
Complexity of the job	75	23	2
Appreciation by the public	34	50	16
Frustrations	54	35	11

Responses to this question tabulated for 362 officials reporting five or more years of service in elective city office.

Which one of the following areas affecting children will require the greatest added attention in your city/town over the next two years?

Alcohol and Drug Abuse	39%
Child Care	19
Education	17
Youth Employment	6
Recreation	5
Delinquency Prevention	3
Housing	3
Teen Pregnancy	2
Child Abuse	2
Health	1
Parent counseling	1
Adoption	0
Nutrition	0
Other (open-ended question)	2

Evaluate how each of the following is affecting economic growth in your city/town.

	Inadequate for Growth	Adequate for Growth	Not a Factor
Supply of Affordable Housing	51	42	7
Roads and Highways	48	47	5
Solid Waste Disposal	45	45	10
Educational Level of Workforce	32	60	8
Supply of Properly Zoned Land	30	63	7
Scheduled Airline Service	28	45	27
Quality of Local Schools	28	68	4
Sewage Treatment	21	72	7
Water Quality and Supply	15	76	9

The fourth annual NLC survey of municipal elected officials was conducted December 3-7,1988 during the Congress of Cities in Boston, Massachusetts.

690 elected city and town elected officials from 473 communities completed the four page questionnaires which were distributed during workshops and meetings held throughout the conference. Elected officials from 48 states and the District of Columbia responded.

Officials from all population size classifications responded. Ten percent were from communities under 10,000, 47 percent were from cities of between 10,000 and 50,0000, 18 percent were from communities with populations between 50,000 and 100,000 and 25 percent were from communities larger than 100,000 population.

23 percent of those responding were mayors, 74 percent city council members and the remaining three percent other elected officials.

On a regional basis 37 percent of the respondents were from the South, 32 percent from the Midwest, 22 percent from the West and 9 percent from the Northeast.

The 690 completed surveys were up 16 percent from the 596 responses received at the preceding Congress of Cities held in Las Vegas, Nevada in 1987.

Responding Officials by City Size and Region
(Number of Officials)

Population Class	Percent	Number	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Under to 10,000	10	69	4	34	14	17
10,000 to 50,000	47	324	29	104	126	65
50,000 to 99,999	18	123	11	42	39	31
100,000 to 299,999	15	107	8	42	30	27
300,000 and over	10	67	9	30	13	15
Total Number	11	690	61	252	222	155
PERCENTAGE	100%	--	9	37	32	22

NEWS

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City Leaders Report Worsening Problems with Drugs and Housing; President Reagan's Final Budget Offers Little Aid, NLC Concludes

Drug problems and housing problems grew substantially worse in cities and towns throughout the United States last year, and the supply of affordable housing is expected to be the top hindrance to local economic growth, according to a survey of municipal officials in 473 communities released today by the National League of Cities.

The findings of the survey provided a sharp contrast to the federal spending priorities submitted by President Reagan in his budget proposals for fiscal 1990, released earlier in the week.

NLC Executive Director Alan Beals characterized the Reagan budget as "out of step with our nation's needs and out of touch with our nation's cities."

"We will urge President-elect Bush and his key domestic policy appointees to make revisions that will reflect some of the pledges he made during the presidential campaign," Beals added.

The survey, conducted during NLC's annual meeting in December, found two-thirds of the respondents reporting that local drug problems had worsened during 1988. Crime, often linked to drug trafficking, was described as worsening by 45 percent of the 690 survey respondents. Some communities had more than one respondent.

Drugs were identified most often as one of the top three problems currently -- and likely to continue -- facing communities around the country. Drugs also were clearly seen as the local condition that has deteriorated most over the past five years, followed by crime, another drug-related issue.

(more)

"In the face of unrelenting drug trafficking and drug-related violence, the president wants to abolish funding for local drug assistance," said Beals. "When you see proposals like that, it's not surprising that 75 percent or more of our survey group consistently expressed an opinion that the federal government would make a less than adequate effort, or none at all, in fulfilling its responsibilities in dealing with drugs -- or over a dozen other important domestic issues."

Affordability of housing, affordability of rental housing, cost of living, homelessness and availability of low-income housing were all bunched together behind drugs as the next areas in which local conditions deteriorated in 1988. Forty percent or more of the respondents reported a worsening situation in each category.

Looking ahead at factors that may affect local economic growth, 51 percent said the supply of affordable housing is inadequate for growth, putting that issue ahead of roads, solid waste facilities and education.

"While our survey group said a whole range of housing issues had worsened . . . the president's budget calls for elimination of local revenue bonds for housing, cuts aid for the homeless in half, cuts low-income energy assistance by a quarter, reduces Community Development Block Grants by 12 percent, cuts funds for rental rehabilitation, cuts the over-all budget authority for low-income housing assistance by 16 percent, and proposes some additional housing vouchers as a Band Aid," Beals commented.

Other conditions described as worsening by at least 30 percent of the survey group were solid waste disposal (39 percent), poverty (38 percent), AIDS (36 percent), local mortgage conditions (35 percent), interest rates on city borrowing (32 percent), city fiscal conditions (30 percent) and streets and sidewalks (30 percent).

More than half (55 percent) reported improved over-all economic conditions in 1988, and 46 percent said unemployment diminished. Other areas of improving local conditions were streets and sidewalks (46 percent), water and sewer treatment (39 percent), over-all city fiscal conditions (39 percent) and education (38 percent).

(more)

Two out of three officials expected to hold the line on local tax rates this year, but 27 percent predicted a local tax increase and 61 percent said local user fees and service charges were likely to rise. Looking at the municipal workforce, 27 percent expected to add workers and 16 percent were anticipating cutbacks, with the remainder staying at current levels. In last year's survey, 35 percent expected to raise taxes, 68 percent expected fee increases and 16 percent projected cuts in the municipal workforce.

Twenty-eight percent of this year's survey group said they did not think it will be possible to maintain their current level of services without a tax increase, compared to 34 percent a year ago.

Thirteen percent said they expected to reduce local spending this year, while 46 percent anticipated budget increases. Last year, 14 percent expected cutbacks and 48 percent increases.

The top problems identified by the survey group -- currently and over the next two years -- were identical: drugs, solid waste disposal, overall economic conditions, crime and city fiscal conditions.

When the survey asked about how local officials view their work, Beals said that while a majority found increasing frustrations, complexity and time demands in being public officials, they also felt they were becoming better able to solve problems.

Referring to a speech given by NLC President Terry Goddard a week earlier at the National Press Club, Beals commented, "That seems to confirm Mayor Goddard's belief that our local leaders are prepared to help carry the load in dealing with a lot of tough domestic problems."

Three out of four survey respondents said their local economies were growing in 1988, and over 80 percent expected to see local economic growth in 1989. While many local officials (35 percent) felt their relationships had soured with Washington over the past five years, 57 percent said they felt they had built better relationships with their business community, and also with local residents (43 percent), state government (32 percent) and the news media (31 percent). Only 11 percent felt relationships with the federal government had improved.

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